

## **EXHIBIT J**

Septem

Honorable William G. Young  
United States District Judge for the District of Massachusetts

Dear Judge Young,

My name is Kim Zea and I am Veronica Zea's mother. I am rewriting my letter to you to include events over the last year and a half since I completed my first.

Our daughter, Veronica, is witty and compassionate. Her humor is often self-deprecating, which is hard for a mom to hear sometimes, but she is funny. She has a great love of animals. She's somewhat of a homebody normally (more so now). She doesn't have a lot of friends, but she is a good friend. She gives hugs regularly and will not go to bed without telling us that she loves us and that she will see us in the morning. She has taken up cross-stitch, has always loved jigsaw puzzles and enjoys reading. She is usually plugged into something as a distraction. She is smart, but naïve. She has always kept her feelings to herself. She projects a tough exterior, but she is extremely vulnerable. She hates herself for the pain that she has caused others (the Steiners and her own family). She is constantly apologetic.

I began my first letter to you in December of 2020, on the day that my husband took our then 26-year-old daughter to San Francisco to be booked as a federal felon, which is still unbelievable to me.

In that letter, I went into a lot of detail to describe Veronica's struggles with anxiety, lack of self-confidence and her inability to assert for herself throughout her young life. I tried to illustrate that she has long standing traits that may have kept her from standing up to her employers and also from communicating appropriately with the various agents that interviewed her. I also explained that Veronica has had lifelong issues with sleeping, including having night terrors as a child.

I described how we sought therapy for Veronica when she was pre-school age and saw the first psychiatrist when she was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, when she wouldn't go outside because of a fear of tornadoes (we have always lived in California). Our choices were limited by our health insurance at that time in our lives and it was hard to find good clinicians that worked with children, so we didn't stay with anyone for long. We tried medication, which was helpful at first, but was clearly not right for Veronica at the prescribed dose. We decided that medication was not a good solution for her. We later learned that what was prescribed is not recommended for children or adolescents.

During this time, Veronica became a voracious reader. In Kindergarten, it was as if someone just turned on a switch and she magically knew how to read. I couldn't get her to put down a book to go to school. Math was intuitive to her, but she would often lose points for not showing her work, even though she had the right answer. She was in the GATE program (Gifted and Talend Education) in elementary school. Although she was clearly very bright, she had difficulties with doing school work. This got worse in middle and high school. She was never a bad student, but in a very competitive school district, she felt that she was dumb.

When Veronica was in middle school, her aunt suffered a severe heart attack and this triggered a full-blown panic attack in Veronica. She feared for her aunt, but also worried about something similar happening to one of us. We absolutely needed professional help and Veronica began seeing a new therapist on a regular basis to help her through this and other ongoing issues.

When Veronica was in high school, we, together with Veronica and her therapist, decided that we might need to give medication another try. Thankfully we were able to pay out of pocket and we took her to a highly recommended psychiatrist for adolescents. Veronica was put on medication to combat depression and was also diagnosed with ADHD. The medications helped Veronica, but she still had ups and downs.

When it was time for college, Veronica first went to our local community college. Her boyfriend, Michael, went to George Washington University. She went to visit him a couple of times the first year and she wanted to go to school near to him. She loved Washington DC and was never so sure about such a big decision in her life. She applied to and was accepted at American University. How could we say no, even though we knew it wouldn't be easy for her or us? She enrolled as a transfer student and did fairly well while she was there. We had a couple of panicky phone calls, and she suffered a concussion from banging her head on something in her sleep, but she made it through. Veronica is the first in our little family to go to college and earn a degree.

When Veronica began working at eBay (her first job after college), she was not happy there, but anything new takes a period of adjustment for her. She wanted to quit. Because it is hard for her to start something new, I pressed her gain some experience and then find a new job before leaving. Veronica was afraid of her boss, Jim Baugh, and I understand that he told the analysts that he would know if they sought another job. So, even when she may have been able to find other work, she stayed put. I cannot tell you how much I beat myself up for not realizing what an unhealthy work environment she was in and encouraging her to leave even without another job.

Eventually, things seemed to get better. There were several team bonding events and Veronica became friends with one of the other analysts (one that has not had charges brought against her). Veronica seemed to be settling in, although it still wasn't the type of work that she had wanted to do – she was hoping to eventually work for the government to help the general public rather than executives.

In my first letter, I described how our pet cats had a calming effect on Veronica when she was young. They were both old and gone at this time, but we had taken in a stray. It is fair to say that Veronica is obsessed with cats (she loves all animals) and she was completely devoted to this guy. In early 2019, we received a call that our cat was found dead in a neighbor's yard. You could cut Veronica's grief with a knife. She cried in bed for two full days. On the third, day she had to pull herself together as there was a conference for work that she needed to go to. Work became a welcome distraction, but she was still distraught.

We had a short family trip to Lake Tahoe planned for March of 2019 while Veronica's sister would be home from college for Spring break. We had a place rented and were looking forward to getting away from the loss that we still felt in our home for a few days. Veronica had the time scheduled off but was then asked to fly to Europe for work during that same week. She had to back out of our trip. Although Europe, including my mother's home city, sounded like an exciting replacement, she had no time for sightseeing or even meeting a family member for coffee. It was all work.

We planned a vacation for early September of 2019, and I asked Veronica to get a promise that eBay would not pull that out from under her. I became anxious about this because just a few weeks before we were set to leave, they sent her to Boston and, while she was there, the trip was extended by a few days. She and I talked on the phone on the day that she was originally supposed to return, and she was crying. She wanted to come home. She did not share with me any of the details of what was going on but she said again that she wanted to quit and at this point I agreed that this was not good for her and we would work on it together. I assumed that some of what had her so stressed was that she was exhausted. As I said, she was never a good sleeper and it is worse when she travels (even with us).

Between the time that Veronica returned home and we left for our vacation, she was suspended by eBay. While we were on our vacation, Veronica continued to receive phone calls from Jim Baugh and also from the agency that she was contracted with. She was even invited to Las Vegas the following week to tour the headquarters of her actual employer. Because of this, her suspension seemed to be some kind of formality to us. Not too much longer after our return from Yellowstone, she was let go. Rather than be upset, she was extremely relieved.

Veronica explained to us that she was told not to tell us or anyone about the situation at eBay for security reasons. Even after she was dismissed, Veronica continued to put trust in the former police officers and the person that she believed to be a former CIA agent with whom she worked. Although I never met any of them, I admit that I also trusted that, given their backgrounds and the number of people interacting, they were still just sorting things out with eBay. I never thought that Veronica could be involved in anything that could not be explained.

The day that Veronica received the letter from the AUSA was the same day that she and I went to bring her sister home from the emergency room 3 hours away. Rylie had a more than serious kidney infection and was still away at college. Due to some other abnormalities, we were dealing with the scare of possible cancer over the next days and weeks (thankfully unfounded).

Veronica did not want to burden us further with her problems, so she did not tell us about the letter until much later.

It wasn't until November that Veronica made her father and me aware that she was supposed to go in for questioning by the FBI. She had hired an attorney recommended by Jim Baugh. She met with her for the first time just the day before questioning and told me that she liked her OK. I drove with Veronica over to the meeting place since that was all that I could do – she was terrified. Afterward, Veronica said that she was not at all prepared for the questioning. She said that she thought she was only supposed to answer the questions that she was asked and was not free with extra information, which is actually normal for her. Her attorney told her later that she should have been more forthcoming. Veronica also informed me much later that she threw up her Adderall due to nerves prior to the meeting. There is a clear difference in her when she has Adderall on board. She only takes it when she has to because it has some unpleasant side effects, but she does have better concentration and focus.

In December of 2019, Veronica got a new job, again in the security department of a large company. She had said to me that she wished this would have been her first job experience. She had no idea how dysfunctional her department was at eBay until she had this to compare it to. Her hours were regular, and she did not need to work weekends. She had rented an apartment in early 2019, but she moved back in with us because she could not bear to be alone (she often stayed here even before, because she didn't sleep well when alone, but she did try to be on her own). She paid her rent on her lease for the following 6 months until it was up.

Veronica continues to see the same psychiatrist that she started with in high school, and upon her recommendation, is also seeing another therapist on a weekly basis to help her through the trauma she has been experiencing since this all began. During this more intense self-scrutiny, Veronica began to see that she might be "on the spectrum" and decided to seek out a specialist for an in-depth evaluation.

Veronica was determined to be autistic. This diagnosis came as absolutely no surprise to me and is the main reason for my rewrite. It explained so much. How I wish that someone would have recognized this earlier so that we might have had access to appropriate resources and help when she was younger. Veronica was always a good kid, but we had our challenges with her in certain areas -- particularly getting her to talk about difficult things or to share with us when something was wrong. In fact, I resorted to using a notebook to try to get her to "talk" about her feelings when she was in grade school (I still have it and it still breaks my heart to read it). Her defense mechanisms have always been avoidance and procrastination – which is very likely why we are here – she does a version of sticking her head in the sand.

It was January 2020 when we learned that Veronica was to be charged. I couldn't believe it. Veronica is not a law breaker. There was nothing in her life (or ours) that was more devastating. The anguish was tangible. With the attorney's permission, Veronica asked me to sit in and listen to what the next steps would be. Although she was certainly sorry for her, I did not get the sense that she was terribly supportive. Granted, she did the work that she did on a small



retainer. She explained to us how much it would cost going forward. I am the registrar at a small law school, and I brought the gist of the matter to my boss and asked her if the amount of money that the attorney wanted for the remainder of the process was real. She suggested that my daughter get another opinion and gave me a recommendation. Veronica met with Frank Ubhaus a few days later and I saw her spirits rally just from speaking with him. He understood how she was between a rock and a hard place while at eBay and not a bad person. She decided to change attorneys. Again, Veronica avoids confrontation, and stalled when she needed to let the first attorney go. In the end, Frank was the one to notify her of the change to get things underway. Veronica still feels bad for not speaking with her previous attorney directly. She knows what is right, but procrastinates. This is a theme in her life.

Over the next several months, Frank and Veronica worked back and forth with the prosecutor. This included a trip to Boston in February for another round of questions. At each turn, we held out hope that the charges against her would be dropped, but that did not happen. Each time the phone rang was agony – hope became our enemy. The answer was consistently the same. She was to be charged.

The news broke without warning in June of 2020. Veronica was working from home due to COVID restrictions and when Frank called her to let her know, she scrambled to call her employer and explain. They let her go that evening. She understood and, in true Veronica fashion, she felt badly for having let the company down. She explained to me that they would have a hard time because someone was already on maternity leave and now this. During her short time with the company, she felt like she was living a lie and was deceiving her employer and new friends, but she understood that she would lose her job as soon as they knew. Veronica spent the entire day informing her family and closest friends so that they heard it from her first. She felt so ashamed, but at each turn, was in awe of the support that she was receiving.

We were all working from home at that time, due to the pandemic, which made finding work even more difficult for Veronica. And, of course, with a new job comes the very real possibility of getting fired again and losing the trust of people that she isn't up front with at the start. This is not easy for Veronica. She took on some work doing closed captioning at home, but the pay wasn't much. Veronica has been paying for her health insurance, therapist, psychiatrist and attorney on her own, so a job is necessary. Without any urging by me, my boss (the Dean) at the law school where I work very generously asked me if Veronica might want to work with us part time to help with some marketing and web-site work. She started with us in March of 2021 and continues to work there, but is working no more than 20 hours a week (it is a non-profit law school on a very tight budget). Although we are back in the offices, Veronica works from home as much as she can. Not everyone knows her predicament and she tries to keep a low profile, in hopes to not have to explain why she may need to leave her position in the near future. Although I do not work with her directly very often, I hear that people are happy with her work.

Veronica has had her share of physical challenges all along. She has loose ligaments (is "double jointed") and had to have her ACL replaced soon after college. Even so, she still continued to have issues when walking. During this time, she decided to seek out a specialist to re-evaluate her knee and was determined to have a birth defect -- her femur was twisted. She opted for a difficult surgery to "break" and rotate her femur. The surgery went well and her gait has improved. She keeps up with her physical therapy and I am happy to see that she continues with this -- it shows me that she does care about herself on some level. She is most certainly depressed and more reclusive than ever. I am always relieved when I get a smile from her, which is usually when she is playing with our cats (we adopted two adult cats during this time).

Although it's fair to say that she didn't have a lot of opportunity to get in trouble before this, much of that was by Veronica's own choosing -- she did not hang out with kids that drank or used drugs when in high school. She made conscious decisions to abide by the law. She always intended to work in law enforcement in some capacity and didn't want anything to ruin those chances. Unfortunately, her first job had her working with people that she could not bring herself to challenge, and that was her mistake.

Federal Felon is a label for a lifetime. Veronica does not care about owning a gun, but losing the right to vote is painful. She also assumes that she will never be allowed to adopt a baby, and that was something that she strongly considered over having a child of her own. The thought of trying to find serious employment while declaring herself a Federal Felon is going to be a very tough hurdle for her to overcome, and one that she will likely have to jump more than once. Yes, people do it, but this seems insurmountable to her.

I ask that you consider the weight that Veronica already carries with her and will carry for the rest of her life. It is my hope that she does not have to go to serve time at all, and I am so afraid for her if she does. Even the thought of her in a low security facility terrifies her and me. She knows that she did not handle things correctly. She wishes that she could go back in time and at the very least have left eBay (and I wish that I was more supportive of that). But she was afraid. She has been afraid most of her life. Just when she was finally making strides to becoming a self-sufficient adult, her vulnerability resulted in such awful, long lasting and devastating consequences.

And it is not just Veronica that I am worried about. I am worried for my husband. He is the type to keep strong for the rest of us, but this is breaking his heart. He visibly shakes whenever I try to discuss it with him and he hasn't to this point been able to bring himself to write his own letter to you, although he has said that he has tried. He does his own version of avoidance.

Our younger daughter, Rylie, also suffers with anxiety and has begun having panic attacks. Besides her concerns for Veronica, she is worried about our health. She feels like she has to consider Veronica's situation before making decisions in her own life that might depress Veronica further. Thankfully she has continued on her own path having earned her Masters in teaching and getting a job as a high school teacher. She also moved in with her boyfriend. Each

of these events are like knives to Veronica. She wants to be happy for her younger sister (they are best friends), but she feels so overshadowed and left behind.

Veronica's boyfriend of 10+ years, Michael, has been there with her through this (including having gone to Boston with her when she went back for questioning), but any plans for the future are on hold for both of them. I am not sure if they might get married or not, but they are both losing time no matter which direction they choose. It is Veronica that is worried about how her status will also affect him in the long run. They agreed not to make any permanent decisions until the sentencing is done. I am grateful for his patience, but worry for him, too.

Veronica's paternal grandmother had been in poor health and so we never told her. She passed away earlier this year. Veronica had a hard time visiting her because she felt like she was lying to her. It just would have been too confusing to explain. My own mother, who is in better health, is in denial and still seems to think that this will all just go away.

I cannot even express the pain that I feel. It is very true that a mother is only as happy as her least happy child, so I'm not doing great. I am fighting depression. I work too many hours to try to keep from thinking too much. I am awake for several hours each night because I can't stop thinking. My blood pressure has gone up (I am sure that is true for my husband as well). I carry a stone on my chest.

I am not sure any of us are strong enough to see Veronica serve time without further damage. We are all hurting with her and have been for almost three years now. As much as we want this to come to an end, we fear the decision.

It is important to me that you know that I do not blame Veronica for her actions. I am not 100% certain that I would not have also been involved to the same extent at her age and given the circumstances. On the contrary, I am very proud of how she has handled herself since it became clear to her that she had put her trust in the wrong people and also realized the magnitude of the overall crime (if she really knows that even now). She has gained maturity in one of the hardest ways.

The probation officer asked me what I would wish for Veronica in terms of outcome. I replied that I had two wishes – first, that the charges be reduced to something other than a federal felony, and second, that Veronica not have to serve any time. As I expected, she said that she did not think that the first wish is possible. At least I know that now and will put all my hope into the second. But hope has been hard on us. Maybe this last time it will be on our side.

I thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

  
Kim Zea



February 15,

Honorable William G. Young  
United States District Judge for the District of Massachusetts

Dear Judge Young,

My name is Kim Zea and I am Veronica Zea's mother.

As I begin to write this letter (in December), my husband is driving our 26-year-old daughter to San Francisco to be booked as a federal felon. It is one in a series of heart wrenching and unbelievable events that are a result of Veronica's inability to speak up to her many superiors and figures of authority in general.

By the time that you read this, Veronica will be 27 and has already lost a year and a half of her freedom. She has been paralyzed with anxiety and fear. Hope has become an enemy. At this still young age, she feels that her life is over. When asked what she wanted for Christmas or her birthday, she said that she didn't feel that she deserved anything. She is nothing but remorseful for having played a role in the harassment of the couple in Natick, but also because she feels that she has let down her family and friends. She has made a public apology to the couple in the New York Times and she apologizes to us and her boyfriend over and over again.

I was relieved to hear that we have an opportunity to share some insight about our daughter before you determine her sentence. Although I obviously can't say much about the crime and the events surrounding it, I can tell you about Veronica and the difficulties that she has had throughout her young life. There were also several life events during her time at eBay that may have added to her reluctance to try to make changes when she absolutely should have. I am trying to illustrate for you that Veronica is not a bad person, but that she has a hard time standing up for herself. She avoids confrontation. She procrastinates when uncertain. Most of all, she is empathetic toward others.

When Veronica was a baby, she thrashed in her bassinet and always came loose of the swaddling. Her sleep was never what I thought "sleeping like a baby" would be. She slept in short periods. Her naps weren't usually more than an hour long and the morning nap fell away early. She could not fall asleep without someone near and would wake during the night and need someone there to get her back to sleep. She even had night terrors for an unusual 3 nights in a row when she was a toddler (very different from a nightmare).

During the day, Veronica would cry if she did not have someone in view. We had lost our daycare provider for unrelated reasons, but had a hard time finding a replacement that we felt would be sensitive to her extra neediness. I quit work to stay home with Veronica when she was 2 years old. This was not a simple decision as, at the time, I earned half of our income. Through our limited insurance, we sought the help of a counselor, but puppet therapy was not really helpful, so we stopped. At about this same time, we decided to adopt two kittens and they turned out to be a great comfort to Veronica and a good distraction when she became stressed.

We joined a parent co-op nursery school as an affordable way to help keep Veronica socialized and engaged. She loved it, as did I. One day when she was 4 years old, I received a call that she had a fever and I needed to pick her up. I was there within 15 minutes (after loading her little sister, who was also sick, into her car seat). Veronica was crying hysterical tears when I got there. She thought that something happened to me on my way. It felt to her that it took too long for me to get there.

When Veronica was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and learning about weather, she stopped going outside because she was afraid of tornadoes (in California). We sought the help of a child psychiatrist, again within the restraints of our insurance, because this had an effect on her everyday life (going to school was difficult). She was diagnosed with anxiety and was prescribed medication. We started to see some confidence come through, but there were also adverse effects. We decided that the medication was not right for her and weaned her off. Thankfully, she seemed to get over this particular fear and we moved on. We later learned that the medication prescribed was not recommended for children or adolescents.

Veronica was a GATE student (Gifted and Talented Education) in elementary school. When she learned to read in Kindergarten, it was like the turn of a light switch—all of the sudden she could read like magic. Simple math also came to her easily. She read constantly. I had a hard time getting her out the door to school because she would have her head in a book. Things changed in middle school. Learning was no longer intuitive. It was more complicated and required study. Veronica was still a good student, but she did not like school and struggled with doing her homework. Also, if she was out sick, she would not talk to her teachers about the make-up work when she returned—even if she had the work done, she would not approach the teacher to turn it in late. I learned later that this was due to the anxiety.

Physical education was another hurdle for Veronica in middle school. She twisted her ankles several times and suffered a couple of stress fractures. Veronica's GPA dipped just enough to keep her from participating in the National Junior Honor Society. This separated her from several of her friends. Between this and her continued difficulty in some subjects, she became the target of bullying by those who used to be her friends. Veronica asked me to home school her, but I did not think it would be a good idea. I feared she would become a recluse.

When Veronica was in middle school, her aunt/godmother had a severe heart attack. It was not clear if she would survive. Knowing how scared she would be, we wanted to shelter Veronica from this, but we could not avoid telling her that something was wrong. When she went to bed that night, she came back out in a full-blown panic attack. She could not breathe and was beside herself with fear. We distracted her with a cartoon show and held her on the couch that night. It was again difficult for her to go to school. She wanted to be near her father and me. She worried about everyone. We needed help and fast. With a recommendation from her pediatrician, we got the help of a therapist who continued to work with Veronica for several years after. (After open heart surgery, her aunt pulled through, but she was frail.)

High school didn't get much better. Again, Veronica was not a bad student, but in a very competitive environment, she was not on par with her friends. Physical education continued to be a stressor. She could not meet the heart rate requirements (she has naturally low blood pressure) and continued to suffer injuries including a dislocated knee (more on that later). Depression continued and with a nod from her therapist, we decided to see a psychiatrist again. Fortunately, we were in a better financial position and were able to pay out of pocket for a highly recommended psychiatrist who specialized with adolescents (same was true of the therapist). Besides anxiety and depression, Veronica was diagnosed with ADHD. She is not really hyper, so this was not caught by any of her teachers, but it did help explain why learning became more difficult for her when she had to spend time working on it.

The diagnosis as a junior in high school gave Veronica the ability to have more time for tests and more time for assignments. This didn't prove useful because it made her more of an outcast being separated for exams, so she opted out. However, the doctor also prescribed medication for anxiety and depression that was a help to Veronica without the side effects that she experienced when she was younger. Veronica continues to take an antidepressant. She also has a prescription for ADHD medication that she uses only when fully necessary (there are some unwelcome physical side effects).

When the time came to go to college, Veronica applied to a small handful of universities in California, but when she didn't feel comfortable with any of them, she chose to attend a local community college to start. During the year, she went to visit her boyfriend in Washington DC twice and she loved it there (he attended George Washington University). She applied to American University and began there in her sophomore year. Such a school was not really in our budget, but this was one of the rare times that Veronica was decided, so we made it work. Although the distance was difficult for all of us, she seemed to grow by leaps and bounds. Her father and I were comforted by the fact that her devoted boyfriend and two of his sisters, who also lived in the area, were close. They also had their independence, separated by about 30 minutes by metro. Veronica did not exercise her right to ADA accommodations at first but did finally ask for priority registration because the registration process was so stressful for her.

Veronica began at American with a focus on English with her sights on writing, but she decided to change to Criminal Justice. She had realized that the classes that she enjoyed the most in high school were her law class and an evening program put on by the sheriff's department. She wanted a career where she could help people. Veronica was doing well emotionally and academically. While she was gone, one of our two cats from her childhood passed. The other waited until just days after she was home for summer and then also passed. It was hard, but Veronica handled this better than I expected she would. However, not a month later, there was a stray in our yard and Veronica worried over it until we put in the work to make it our pet.

Veronica returned to American for her junior year. Still plagued with sleeping difficulties, she banged her head with some force during the night. She felt so out of sorts that she asked a friend to go with her to the emergency room. She was diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury and sought the care of a specialist in Washington DC. During this time, she took advantage of the accommodations allowed surrounding such an event, but still had difficulty finishing out the year before coming home for the summer. Because Veronica had hit her head when falling from a play structure when she was about 4 years old, some of these effects may be permanent and include difficulty with memory and added issues with concentration.

Veronica returned and finished her degree at American University – she is the first in our family to get a college degree. Throughout all this time, her knee still gave her trouble. Despite a lot of physical therapy and home exercise, it continued to be unstable. After returning home, she met with a sports surgeon and he determined that she was "double jointed", which explained the previous injuries as all of her ligaments are "loose". He said could help with her knee by replacing the MCL band. He did not explain how major this surgery was and what the recovery time would be. She had the surgery in September of 2016. It laid her up for a good 6 weeks and the road to recovery was long.

Also, in September of 2016, Veronica's sister went off to college and I returned to work. Veronica was at home alone with the stray cat that became our pet. The time between graduation and job was getting longer and longer and Veronica was beginning to think she would not find a job. It was becoming a depressing time again, but the cat was a huge help during her alone hours at home. Then she got an interview for a job at eBay as a contracted employee. She got an offer and took it.



When Veronica first started at eBay, she hated it. Although it was within security, she was not doing the kind of work that she had hoped to do. She wanted to help the public and she was spending time writing up weather warnings and similar broadcasts for eBay employees around the world. Besides the work feeling meaningless, she was afraid of the boss. She had told us about other contractors getting fired left and right for seemingly no good reason. She was afraid of getting fired, but also afraid of quitting, because they were told that they would not be able to find work elsewhere if they left. Veronica told us this several times when we discussed the possibility of a change. It didn't help that it took her so long to land this job after graduation.

On a Thursday in September of 2017, Veronica was driving to a physical therapy appointment and was broadsided on her passenger side by an off-duty police car. Her car was totaled. We went to the emergency room to get her checked out and thankfully she seemed to be fine physically. While we were waiting to see the doctor, she received a call from the police department telling her that they saw from the dash cam that the accident was entirely the officer's fault. In complete Veronica fashion, she responded by saying that she hoped that he wouldn't be in trouble and explained how nice he was to her on the scene. When her dad was helping her work with the police department for the settlement to help replace her car, Veronica was worried that he would get the officer in trouble by pushing too hard and asked him not to.

The day after the accident, we left to move Veronica's sister back into the dorms at school. On the evening that we returned, Veronica's aunt, mentioned previously, passed away after having been back in the hospital for her heart. I am so grateful that we were home for the news, but it was devastating. Veronica cherished her aunt. Veronica thankfully did not spiral, and she was a great support to her uncle and cousins in their time of need. I began to feel like she was going to be OK. (Poor Rylie was alone at school with the news, but she came home the following weekend to be with us.)

As her time at eBay went by, Veronica learned more and was promoted to analyst, still on a contractual basis. She began to go to trainings and learn, so she did not find the time so useless, but still hoped to be able to leave one day and serve the public. With the promotion came longer hours and travel. She was no longer hourly, and she even had said that she thought maybe they made her a salaried employee so that they didn't have to pay her overtime. In addition to work hours, there were several team building events, and there seemed to be more of a comradery between her and some of her fellow workers. The "team" became more stable; however, she still maintained a level of caution when it came to the head of her department.

In January of 2019, Veronica got an apartment. She moved out slowly – it was a big deal for her to be out on her own entirely and she wasn't all that sure about it. She was still in our home much of the time in February. Her sister was home for a visit, and we were having a good weekend at home as a family, including dinner out. When we returned, we could not find the cat. He sometimes would stay out late, but he never returned. The next day we got a call that he was found dead in a neighbor's yard. I had not seen Veronica so distraught in years. She cried for 2 full days. I was a mess myself – partly over worry for her and her sister, but the unexpected loss hit us all hard. But on day 3, Veronica pulled herself together and got herself to work because there was a conference that she needed to be at. At the time, her rigorous work schedule was a blessing. The job was a needed distraction from what she considered at the time to be the hardest thing ever to deal with.

We had a rare family trip to Tahoe planned for March of 2019 while Veronica's sister would be home for Spring break. We had a place rented and were looking forward to getting away from the sadness of our catless home for a few days. Veronica had time scheduled off but was then asked to fly to Europe for work during that same week. She had to back out of our trip. Although Europe, including my mother's home city,



sounded like an exciting replacement, she had no time for sightseeing or even meeting a family member for coffee. It was all work.

We planned a vacation for September of 2019, and I asked her to get a promise that eBay would not pull that out from under her. I became anxious about this because just a few weeks before we were set to leave, they sent her to Boston and while she was there, the trip was extended by a few days. She and I talked on the phone on the day that she was originally supposed to return, and she was crying. She wanted to come home. She did not share with me any of the details of what was going on other than to tell me that her closest friend in the group had quit and that she also wanted to quit. I assumed that some of what had her so distraught was that she was exhausted. Sleep is worse for her when away from home.

Between the time that Veronica returned home, and we left for our vacation, she was suspended by eBay. We understood this to be a protective measure while some things surrounding the recent trip were explained to the eBay legal department by those higher up. While we were on our vacation, Veronica continued to receive phone calls from eBay and also from the agency that she was contracted with. She was even invited to Las Vegas the following week to tour the headquarters of her actual employer. Because of this, her suspension seemed to be some kind of formality to us. Not too much longer after our return from Yellowstone, she was let go. She was not upset by this – she was extremely relieved.

Veronica explained to us that she was told not to tell us or anyone about the situation at eBay for security reasons. Even after she was dismissed, Veronica continued to put trust in the former police officers that she worked with and the person that she believed to be a former CIA agent whom she worked for. Although I never met any of them, I admit that I also trusted that, given their backgrounds and the number of people interacting, they were still just sorting things out with eBay.

The day that Veronica received the letter from the AUSA was the same day that she and I drove to pick her sister up from the emergency room 3 hours away. Rylie had a more than serious kidney infection and was still away at college. Over the days and weeks that followed, we were dealing with the scare of possible cancer (thankfully unfounded) and Veronica did not want to burden us further with her problems, so she did not tell us about the letter until much later. She continued to trust her former coworkers and hired an attorney who was recommended by the former head of her department.

It wasn't until November that Veronica made her father and me aware that she was supposed to go in for questioning by the FBI. She was terrified. She met with her attorney for the first time just the day before and told me that she liked her OK, but knowing what I know now, they did not spend enough time together. Veronica was not at all prepared for the questioning. She said that she thought she was only supposed to answer the questions that she was asked and was not free with extra information. She wasn't sure what was expected of her and her attorney didn't tell her until later that she was too tight lipped during the interview.

In December of 2019, Veronica got a new job, again in the security department of a large company. She had said to me that she wished this would have been her first experience. She had no idea how dysfunctional her department was at eBay until she had this to compare it to. Her hours were regular, and she did not need to work weekends. Although she still had her apartment, she was basically living with us again because she could not bear to be alone.

Veronica's defense mechanism is avoidance, which might say a lot about all of this. During her off hours, she spent a lot of time watching cat videos and showing me cats that were available for adoption. We finally relented and adopted an adult cat from the shelter in December of 2019. This brought some joy.

It was January 2020 when we learned that Veronica was to be charged. There was nothing in her life (or ours) that was more devastating. The anguish was tangible. With the attorney's permission, Veronica asked me to sit in and listen to what the next steps would be. I got the sense that her attorney was just going through the motions and wasn't terribly supportive of Veronica. She was certainly sorry for her, but I had to question whether she did all that she could. I am the registrar at a small law school, and I brought the gist of the matter to my boss and told her the amount of money that the attorney wanted for the remainder of the process to see if it was real. She recommended that my daughter get another opinion and gave me a recommendation. Veronica met with Frank Ubhaus a few days later and I saw a good amount of her confidence return just from speaking with him. She decided to change attorneys. However, Veronica felt so bad about letting the first attorney go, that she stalled. In the end Frank was the one to notify of the change to get things underway. Veronica still feels bad for not speaking with her previous attorney directly.

Over the next several months, Frank and Veronica worked back and forth with the prosecutor. This included a trip to Boston in February for another round of questions. At each turn, Veronica and we held out hope that the charges against her would be dropped, but that did not happen. Each time the phone rang was agony. The answer was consistently the same. She was to be charged.

The news broke without warning in June. Veronica was working from home due to COVID restrictions and when Frank called her to let her know, she scrambled to call her employer and explain everything. They let her go that evening. She felt so badly for having let the company down. She told me that they would have a hard time because someone was already on maternity leave and now this. During her entire time with the company, she felt like she was living a lie and was deceiving her employer and new friends, but she understood that she would lose her job as soon as they knew. Veronica spent the entire day informing her family and closest friends so that they heard it from her first. She felt so ashamed, but at each turn, was in awe of the support that she was receiving. It was a hard day for us all. It was the first we learned of the actual happenings.

Veronica gave up her apartment in July of 2020 and is now living with us again. This is to save money, but also, she cannot stand to be alone. Obviously COVID is an additional stressor for us all (my husband is in the high-risk category), but Veronica is not alone at home – my husband has since lost his job and Rylie graduated from college and is back home with sporadic work as a substitute teacher. I am also working from home most days. Unfortunately, Veronica hardly gets to see her boyfriend of 8½ years because he does go to work, and we can't have the risk of COVID infection in our house.

Veronica continues to have difficulties with sleep. She has nightmares and says that when she does have a good dream, it is a nightmare to wake up and remember what she is in the middle of. She has been trying to find work but has been unsuccessful thus far. And, of course, with a new job comes the very real possibility of getting fired again and more lost friendships. Veronica is paying all of her own legal fees and is seeing a new therapist on a weekly basis on the recommendation of her psychiatrist – she is also paying for this herself and it is not inexpensive. She is trying to stay healthy by exercising and keeping busy, but she is so hard on herself. I am always relieved when I get a smile from her, which is usually when she is playing with our cats (2 of them, now).

Although it's fair to say that she didn't have a lot of opportunity to get in trouble before this, much of that was by Veronica's own choosing – she did not hang out with kids that drank or used other drugs when in high school, she would stay home alone instead. That may seem small, but the point is that it mattered to her and she made conscious decisions to abide by the law. Unfortunately, she trusted that the former law enforcement officials that she worked with would also be law abiding citizens. She did not question their

judgement and that was her mistake. Being a federal felon will have far reaching consequences throughout her life. We have already learned that homeowner's insurance is more costly, and I know that is just the tip of the iceberg. Many opportunities are lost for her now.

I ask that you consider the weight that Veronica already carries with her and will carry for the rest of her life. It is my hope that she does not have to go to prison at all, and I am so afraid for her if she does. I do not see how it will help except for the reason of making an example of her. She knows that she did not handle things correctly. She wishes that she could go back in time and at the very least have left eBay. She still to this day does not see that there would have been any other solution for her. But she was afraid. She has been afraid most of her life. It just doesn't seem fair that when she was finally making strides to becoming a self-sufficient adult, her vulnerability got the best of her.

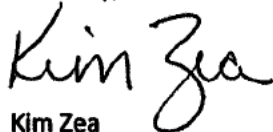
And it is not just Veronica that I am worried about. I am worried for my husband. He is the type to keep strong for the rest of us, but this is breaking his heart. Our younger daughter, Rylle, also suffers with anxiety and she is as stressed as the rest of us. Besides her concerns for Veronica, she is worried about our health. My mother is confused and seems to be in denial – when I told her that Veronica said that the Marshall that booked her was very nice, my mom replied that maybe there is a job opportunity for her. I cannot even express how I feel. It is true that a mother is only as happy as her least happy child. I haven't been happy in quite some time now. I am fighting depression. I work too many hours to try to keep from thinking too much. I am awake for several hours each night, mulling. My blood pressure has gone up and I am sure that is true for my husband as well. I am not sure any of us are strong enough to see Veronica go to prison without lasting damage. I think that there already is lasting damage.

It is important to me that you know that I am not at all ashamed of Veronica. I am not 100% certain that I would not have also been involved to the same extent at her age and given the circumstances. On the contrary, I am very proud of how she has handled herself since it became clear to her that she had put her trust in the wrong people and also realized the magnitude of the overall crime (if she really knows that even now). She is maturing in one of the hardest ways imaginable.

With the sentencing date now moved from February to May, here it is over a month since I started this letter, although I have worked on it often throughout. Veronica comes by her tendencies naturally. This is the most important letter of my life and I wanted to be sure to get it right, but I am afraid.

I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Zea". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Kim" is written in a larger, more prominent script, and "Zea" follows it in a similar but slightly smaller script. The signature is positioned above the printed name "Kim Zea".

Kim Zea